

## Revival 616

### Chapter 616 Renaming

Yang Jian looked at Wang Xiaoming, who was stretching out his hand, but did not take it, saying only, "There's no need for such courtesy, our relationship is merely a straightforward transaction. I have done what I should, and have fulfilled my obligations to the headquarter. I just hope you will keep your word in our final deal."

"If your words are meant to deceive me, or if you have any other ulterior motives, I believe many people will die because of your cleverness. Do not doubt my ability, and do not doubt my determination, for I am no longer truly a man of the headquarter. A mere title can no longer restrain me."

Wang Xiaoming paused and withdrew his hand, "My personal presence here today already represents my sincerity. After all, you could kill me at any moment. I know you don't trust me, but you should believe in the circumstances."

"The current situation does not allow you to die."

Yang Jian said, "I don't trust the situation, I only trust facts. Additionally, I want to ask you one more thing. I killed Fang Shiming, where is his body?"

Wang Xiaoming said, "You want that pair of scissors?"

Immediately, he guessed Yang Jian's intention.

"Correct, it's my spoils of war. You wouldn't be thinking of double-crossing me, would you?" Yang Jian said with a cold face. "Let's keep things separate, you can't mix this matter with what we talked about before."

Wang Xiaoming said, "It was Cao Yang who pinpointed Fang Shiming's location. He did not report the specifics back to headquarter. If there are Ghost Scissors, he is a likely suspect. Right now, Cao Yang is busy dealing with Fang Shiming's corpse, and whether he can successfully handle it or not is still uncertain. If Cao Yang ends up with the Ghost Scissors after dealing with the body, it's unlikely he would hand them over."

Yang Jian said, "Then give me the address, and I'll get it myself."

"Your timing does not allow you to do that," Wang Xiaoming said earnestly.

"Are you worried about me, or are you just fobbing me off?"

Yang Jian's gaze darkened, the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box indeed caused him a great deal of trouble.

Wang Xiaoming, who also didn't want to ruin this negotiation over a supernatural item, said, "How about this: if Cao Yang gets hold of the Ghost Scissors, I can request that he gives them to you, but whether he agrees or not, I can't say. After all, he is Captain Level now. Many things are different from before. If he doesn't agree and you have to retrieve them yourself later on, I won't stop you."

"Good, I'll remember this. I hope you really won't obstruct me by then," Yang Jian said.

"Of course," Wang Xiaoming said.

Yang Jian said nothing more and turned to leave.

Wang Xiaoming stood still, watching as everything around him changed once again. He was no longer on a rooftop but had arrived in the lobby of the first floor of Ping'an Hotel. It was the Ghost Domain that changed location and sent him back.

At this time, Cao Yanhua, Wei Jing, and Liu Xiaoyu were all waiting here.

"Professor Wang, how did it go? What did Yang Jian say to you?" Cao Yanhua hurried over, eager to know.

Wang Xiaoming said, "I've made an agreement with him; I help him get rid of the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box, and he accepted my request."

"What? Yang Jian agreed so quickly? He didn't make any excessive demands?"

Cao Yanhua was immediately surprised because according to Yang Jian's prior character, he would definitely have made some outrageous demands this time, not backing down without a good cut. Cao had even prepared himself for certain concessions.

Wang Xiaoming said, "No, he did not make any demands."

Cao Yanhua immediately furrowed his brows: "Why?"

"It's normal for an employee working hard to ask for a raise, but suddenly one day, if an employee doesn't want a salary, what does that signify, Deputy Minister, or don't you know?"

Wang Xiaoming said, "You should know, today Yang Jian didn't just stay away from the headquarter, he didn't even meet with you."

Cao Yanhua fell silent.

That's the sign of a collective heart disintegration; having nothing but a title left means future encounters will likely not be as manageable as before.

"Let's go back, there's no other way to deal with this for now. However, you'll have to work hard recently, Professor Wang. You must resolve Yang Jian's curse, and there is only room for success, not failure, or the consequences are unimaginable," Cao Yanhua sighed and then earnestly entreated again.

The stability of the current situation was all because Yang Jian was still alive.

If Yang Jian were to die, his ghost would awaken, coupled with the Ghost Painting incident and the extermination of his circle of friends... the situation would completely collapse.

"I know," Wang Xiaoming said calmly.

The group left Ping'an Hotel once more.

Yet as they were leaving, Liu Xiaoyu seemed somewhat out of it, for she noticed everything around her was changing — people nearby were disappearing, and everything seemed to become quiet.

"You still owe me a favor, do this last thing for me," Yang Jian's voice suddenly appeared, and he was sitting on the sofa in the lobby, looking calmly at Liu Xiaoyu without anyone knowing when he had arrived.

Liu Xiaoyu was somewhat surprised and also a bit pleased as she said, "What do you need me to help with? I can't really do much, but if needed, I can ask the deputy head..."

Before she could finish, Yang Jian interrupted, "I don't trust them anymore, and this matter is a private affair. I don't want a third person to know about it."

"What is it about?" Liu Xiaoyu asked.

Yang Jian replied, "It's nothing special. I want you to find a chance to get into the headquarters' identity system and change a name for me."

"Change a name? Why on earth would you do that?" Liu Xiaoyu looked perplexed.

"To avoid a terrible curse. There seems to be a curse that requires a name as a medium; I want to see if changing it might work. It's just an attempt; I'm not even sure if it will help since this matter is quite mysterious, and hard to explain clearly," Yang Jian explained.

He was taking precautionary measures in advance, avoiding the curse of the Ghost Scissors, as it was very likely that Cao Yang would have them for a while. Just in case Cao Yang wouldn't hand them over, Yang Jian would have to fight again.

Liu Xiaoyu readily agreed, "No problem, I can do that. What name do you want to change to?"

"I don't know; you choose one randomly for me. As for the name, don't let me know, and don't let anyone else know either," Yang Jian said.

Liu Xiaoyu was puzzled again, "Keeping it a secret from me is pointless; the others will still find out."

"My file is highly confidential, at the Captain Level, and not many people have access to it. It's fine as long as most can't find it," Yang Jian explained.

"I understand," Liu Xiaoyu nodded.

Yang Jian continued, "That'll be it then. If you ever lose your job due to a work mistake, you can go to Dachang City. I can arrange a job for you, provided I'm still alive."

Just as Liu Xiaoyu wanted to say something more, she realized that Yang Jian had already vanished before her eyes.

Everything around became normal once again.

"Liu Xiaoyu, what are you standing there dazed for? It's time to go back."

When Cao Yanhua saw Liu Xiaoyu standing motionless at the door, he immediately urged her.

Liu Xiaoyu came back to her senses and hurriedly responded, jogging to catch up, not mentioning the matter of Yang Jian suddenly asking for her help. Since she had promised to keep it a secret, she intended to do so.

Yang Jian watched as the vehicles departed, his gaze slowly retracting.

In his hand, there was another box.

This box contained papers made from human skin.

Although he had given Wang Xiaoming two days to resolve the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box, this did not mean Yang Jian would sit around waiting for news; he also needed to act and see if he could find a way to break the curse within those two days.

"However, I can't stay at the Ping'an Hotel anymore; I need to find a new place to settle," Yang Jian thought to himself.

He thought of a good place.

He Tianxiong's home.

This guy had lost to him in the past and had to compensate him with a villa and a significant portion of his assets; now that his circle of friends was gone, very few would know of He Tianxiong's residence. It would be a good place to stay.

Moreover, upon hearing the news of his circle of friends being gone, this guy would probably never dare to return to the city again.

With this in mind, Yang Jian went back to his room to pack up and leave.

"Are you done with everything?" In the room, Zhang Lei and Huang Ziyu had not left, and at this moment, Wang Jiang was also present.

Yang Jian said, "Pretty much done. I'm leaving now. You can call me if you need anything. If you can't reach me, go to this address to find me."

After saying that, he wrote down an address.

"If you can't find me and also can't reach me by phone, then I must be dead. You don't need to worry about teaming up anymore. By the way, I've resigned from the captain's position; teaming up with me means leaving headquarters. If you want headquarters' help in the future, you'll need to deal with supernatural events, so think it over," Yang Jian instructed.

"Perhaps joining under another captain might be a good choice," he suggested.

He didn't insist, merely offering them a choice.

The three were momentarily stunned, seemingly not expecting things to take such a turn.

Without waiting for their response, Yang Jian had already disappeared with his bag in hand.

Chapter 617 The Wrong Plan

Setting aside Wang Xiaoming's plan, Yang Jian currently had only three methods to deal with the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

Board that supernaturally haunted bus once again.

Make his own demands after completing a trade with the Ghost Cabinet.

Information on human skin paper.

Besides these three, Yang Jian felt that the method of returning to Caesar Hotel to pursue Xiang Lan and the secret of the Eight-Tone Music Box was too elusive. Not to mention the high level of danger, he didn't know how much time it would take, or if he might even end up trapped in that ghostly place. Once the curse erupted, he would undoubtedly die.

At this very moment.

In a villa complex on the outskirts of the city, Yang Jian sat alone in Villa Number Eight, contemplating.

In front of him was still the large amount of compensation He Tianxiong had left when he departed... It was a pile of gold, along with some asset contracts.

But now Yang Jian had lost interest in these things, after all, originally he had wanted money just to take care of some affairs after his death. Now that everything had been arranged properly, additional assets seemed superfluous; he didn't have a life left to spend and enjoy them anyway.

"The three plans, in order, should be to put the Ghost Cabinet's plan first, the human skin paper second, and the bus last," Yang Jian considered for a while before making his arrangements.

As for why the bus plan was the last option, it was because he also felt that the probability of dying upon boarding the bus was very high.

Wang Xiaoming's words were somewhat credible after all.

The plan involving the Ghost Cabinet was the most secure because Yang Jian knew the trading rules of the Ghost Cabinet. As long as the Ghost Cabinet could fulfill its part, the matter would be settled, though, of course, it was a bit of a hassle.

"Find the person in the photograph? The deadline is one year." Yang Jian was still holding the photograph in his hand.

"A year's deadline to find the person in the photograph... ample time, seemingly a simple task, yet now that I think it through, it hides a deep trap. What if this person doesn't exist at all in the world? How would I search? Am I expected to conjure a person out of thin air to offer to the Ghost Cabinet?"

"And the person in the photo is suspected to be the same as in the ghost painting, but the ghost painting isn't completely her, just a painting after all. Is she the Ghost Bride I encountered on the bus last time? Or do I need to collect all the puzzle pieces to reach my goal?"

Yang Jian's gaze flickered: "That shouldn't be possible. The request I made last time was to find Zhao Lei, which was a simple task. The Ghost Cabinet wouldn't suddenly escalate the difficulty of the task so much, so I don't need to collect all the puzzle pieces. It's very likely that finding the puzzle pieces would be enough. As long as I relay the positions of the puzzle pieces to the Ghost Cabinet, the task would be considered complete."

After some thought.

He figured that the task was quite challenging because he did not know if the person in the photograph was indeed the ghost in the ghost painting. If so, he had no idea how many puzzle pieces of the ghost existed.

Therefore, the only help he could seek up to this point was one thing.

Human skin paper.

Yang Jian put down the photograph, his gaze shifted, and he looked back at the gold box.

Truth be told, he was quite wary of it; within the information hid terrifying traps that one could easily fall into with a single careless step. And if one did fall into a trap, it meant death.

The only time there wasn't a trap might have been during the Ghost Coffin incident in Huanggang Village.

Could the human skin paper be afraid of the Ghost Envoy, worrying about being consumed by them? Or is it afraid of being permanently suppressed by the Ghost Envoy, losing this bizarre ability completely?

"I can't trust Wang Xiaoming, nor can I trust the human skin paper, but to survive, I have to make a choice," Yang Jian put on his gloves.

The specially made gloves could isolate the supernatural; he was always this cautious.

After opening the box, he took out the human skin paper.

The dark brown human skin paper still showed no change, folded in a way that it was inconspicuous.

But a strange, chilly aura was always perceptible.

This thing was indeed somewhat sinister.

"My name is Yang Jian, and by the time you read this, I'm already dead..." On the human skin parchment, eerie black script emerged, forming a complete sentence that appeared before Yang Jian. But that was all there was.

Normally, the human skin parchment didn't require questioning, and not even threats were needed, it would always seemingly reveal future information on its own.

The key was whether it was willing to divulge that information.

"Don't give useless information; I need to know how to break the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box. Spare me the threats, I don't have many chances to choose from this time. If I can't find answers from you, then you will have completely lost your value to me," Yang Jian spoke as if he was conversing with an unknown supernatural entity or questioning a ghost that dwelled within the human skin.

Whether his words had any effect was unknown, but the script on the human skin continued to emerge.

Following the previous sentence, new script surfaced on the human skin, "The reason I died was that I was cursed by the Eight-Tone Music Box at a certain moment. At twelve o'clock on the night of the twenty-fifth, the curse will erupt on time. I couldn't dispel the curse. If you can see this, remember not to open that music box, don't ever do it."

Yang Jian's expression darkened. It seemed to be an outdated piece of information since he had already opened the Eight-Tone Music Box. However, based on the date, he would die from the curse of the music box at twelve o'clock on the night of the twenty-fifth. Calculating from now, he had three days left to live.

The time was not ample but not short, either. It was an average number of days among those who had been cursed before. His luck hadn't been so bad that he couldn't survive even two days.

But quickly, new content surfaced beneath this outdated piece of information.

The black script was eerie, as if a vengeful ghost had written it, "I tried to use various methods to resolve the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box in my last period of time, but unfortunately, they all failed. Nevertheless, I acquired some information related to the curse of the music box; I had analyzed the melody of the music box."

Quickly.

The following black traces appeared on the human skin, but they didn't form words. Instead, they resembled a music score, with musical notes on it.

"The melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box?" Yang Jian thought for a moment and took a photo with his phone, which might be useful.

Even though he had no clue about music scores.

"Today is the twenty-fourth. I tried to replay the melody of the Eight-Tone Music Box using different instruments and consulted some people. I concluded that this melody is most likely played on the piano. I'm wondering if the curse comes from the music box? Or a particular piano?"

A piano?

Yang Jian's gaze flickered slightly. Caesar Hotel room 71?

But the script on the human skin continued to emerge, "On the evening of the twenty-fourth, I tried to enter a place I had visited before, looking for a certain room's piano. I encountered some perils and almost died, but I eventually found it. However, I heard two other distinct melodies coming from that piano at the room's door."

"Two melodies?" Yang Jian paid attention to this information.

He had heard the piano piece from room 71. The first melody was the Eight-Tone Music Box tune played by the mysterious woman, Xiang Lan. The second was a strange lullaby played by the ghost in the room. Could there be a third melody?

"But I failed. I didn't lift the curse, yet it seemed I had grasped a trick. Maybe combining the three different melodies into one piece of music could produce an unexpected effect."

"The reason for my failure wasn't because I didn't dare to play the piano in that room, it was that I simply couldn't play."

"..." At this moment, Yang Jian felt like he was being played by the human skin parchment.

The script continued to emerge, "This plan failed, but I inadvertently discovered some terrifying secrets about that place. I'm about to die, with no time left. I left there, seeking new methods... On the twenty-fifth at midnight, I failed and died from the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box."

All the script then began fading away swiftly, as if Yang Jian in that future moment truly did as the human skin described, searching for the secrets of room 71 at Caesar Hotel, only to choose the wrong plan, wasting time and ultimately dying under the curse.

However, after all the script vanished, new script emerged, "My name is Yang Jian, and by the time you read this, I'm already dead... I faced many dangers and endured terrifying events. Most of all, beware the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box; I nearly died from that curse once."

"Hmm?"

At this moment, Yang Jian's expression tensed because the information on the human skin parchment had changed, it didn't say he was dead, but that he had nearly died from the curse.

In other words, a possibility to survive had emerged.

## Chapter 618 A New Trap

Yang Jian looked at the new characters that emerged on the skin parchment and immediately perked up, becoming especially serious.

Because this time, the information on the skin parchment didn't spell death for him, which meant that the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box was not necessarily fatal; there was a way to break it.

Now, the plan involving the bus had been dismissed.

The plan involving Caesar Hotel had been dismissed.

If the skin parchment's plan was too difficult or too dangerous, then Yang Jian would have to reconsider the Ghost Cabinet.

Sitting on the sofa, Yang Jian looked at the skin parchment in his hands, where the black characters surfaced, forming a new message.

"The curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box is terrifying. I tried many methods, but in the end, none of them worked. I felt despair and had even prepared for death. However, just when my life fell into the darkest pit, someone appeared."

"His name was Wang Xiaoming."

"...Yes, it was him who saved me, who helped me escape the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box."

"What a joke, after all that, you're passing the buck to Wang Xiaoming?" Yang Jian's face instantly darkened.

However, the characters stopped here and no new message emerged.

Yang Jian's gaze flickered as he felt that this seemingly simple information was actually very complicated and unsettling.

The message on the skin parchment confirmed that Wang Xiaoming had a way to resolve the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box, convincing him to believe in Wang Xiaoming.

However, he was always aware that there were certain traps within the messages of the skin parchment.

But this message from the skin parchment pointed to Wang Xiaoming, as if there were no traps, or perhaps the traps still existed, not on the skin parchment's side, but on Wang Xiaoming's side—the Wang Xiaoming who might be trying to exploit this opportunity for plans and calculations unknown to him.

As a result, Yang Jian became even more wary of Wang Xiaoming.

"But what if the skin parchment did it on purpose?" Yang Jian had another thought.

If Wang Xiaoming was not the problem, its message only served to increase his doubts and guard against him, indirectly leading him to abandon Wang Xiaoming's plan, then make other arrangements, which in the end could get him killed...

Besides, other plans could also be useful.

Like continuing the trade with the Ghost Cabinet, or as previously revealed by the skin parchment, going to room 71 of Caesar Hotel to confirm the three different musical melodies, and trying to combine them into a complete song.

After all, he now had the music score of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

If he started to learn the piano now, it should still be possible, not resulting in death from not being able to play the piano, as the skin parchment had stated.

Yang Jian gradually fell into silence.

He felt that the problem he faced this time was more serious than the previous ones, because this time the skin parchment had brought Wang Xiaoming into the picture, adding an uncertainty that made choosing even harder, and it involved the gambits between people.

In other words,

the skin parchment, Yang Jian, and Wang Xiaoming had formed some complex interconnections.

Yang Jian did not trust the skin parchment, nor did he trust Wang Xiaoming.

Likewise, Wang Xiaoming certainly didn't trust the skin parchment, nor did he trust Yang Jian.

Although the skin parchment was not trusted, it had value, and this value was certainly useful to Yang Jian and definitely to Wang Xiaoming as well.

"That day at headquarters, I lent the skin parchment to Wang Xiaoming for half an hour in exchange for a Ghost Candle. What information did the skin parchment reveal to him in that half hour? What did Wang Xiaoming see during that time?"

Yang Jian was certain that Wang Xiaoming must have seen some very special information during that half an hour with the skin parchment.

That kind of information would be impossible for a smart person to believe, so back then, Yang Jian didn't care much, thinking it wouldn't matter if Wang Xiaoming had contact with the skin parchment.

Just like the parchment saying a friend you know will die tomorrow.

For someone who had just come into contact with the skin parchment, they would find it laughable and would hardly believe it. Even if they did believe it somewhat, it would be with deep skepticism.

Wang Xiaoming's situation was certainly the same, so at that time, he promptly returned the skin parchment without any intention to keep it for himself.

But what if... Your friend really dies the next day?

Then the person who had been in contact with the skin parchment would start to take its messages very seriously.

Therefore, to make Wang Xiaoming believe the parchment's information, it had to be confirmed or Wang Xiaoming had to be given a chance to verify the truth of the information.

So, what unusual event happened recently?

The deceased Wei Jing appeared again!

All of a sudden, Yang Jian thought of this incredible event. He had not been suspicious before, but now thinking deeply, he found that maybe the messages from the skin parchment helped with this matter; otherwise, no matter how smart Wang Xiaoming was, he wouldn't have been able to bring Wei Jing back to life. Only the skin parchment knew about all these bizarre and unbelievable things.

So, has Wang Xiaoming successfully verified the authenticity of the information on the human skin manuscript?

If this assumption is correct.

Now, Wang Xiaoming is very likely starting to believe in the human skin manuscript, but what will happen afterward?

Could the information that follows on the human skin manuscript set a trap for Wang Xiaoming, using him to do something it can't do itself?

For example, Wang Xiaoming's plan to resolve the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box may just come from the information on the human skin manuscript.

If that's true, it would be terrifying.

Yang Jian thought about this and couldn't help but take a deep breath; he was increasingly uneasy about Wang Xiaoming's plan to resolve the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

Because now there's another possibility: Wang Xiaoming might truly want to help him, but he himself may not realize that the plan on the human skin manuscript could be a trap. There's the potential for good intentions turning bad, after all, Wang Xiaoming is human, and humans make mistakes — Wang Xiaoming had erred more than once or twice already.

Wei Jing's experiment failure, the release of the Ghost Envoy, these were his miscalculations.

"Would confronting Wang Xiaoming in person help clarify things?" Yang Jian pondered this question again.

But he quickly shook his head slightly.

Because he simply didn't trust Wang Xiaoming; even if he was telling the truth, Yang Jian might take it as a lie to dismiss it. And Wang Xiaoming was very clever, and clever people have one major flaw — they never let others know their true thoughts.

After all, the human heart is impenetrable; no one can truly place their life in someone else's hands, especially not Yang Jian.

"Having only showed the human skin manuscript to Wang Xiaoming for half an hour, has it already set a trap? Even though the human skin manuscript has already returned to my hands, the trap it set still exists. Even if I'm not afflicted by the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box this time, the next time I encounter something else, the information on the human skin manuscript will similarly leave the problem with Wang Xiaoming."

Yang Jian furrowed his brows deeply.

In other words, there's trouble brewing with Wang Xiaoming, and I'm bound to encounter it sooner or later.

Unless I get rid of Wang Xiaoming.

But now... the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box is right before my eyes. Let's not talk about the great cost of killing Wang Xiaoming; even if I truly killed him, who would help me deal with the curse then?

So.

Yang Jian is now facing a terrifying dilemma.

If I trust Wang Xiaoming, something bad might happen to me.

Not trusting him could also lead to trouble, as it's very possible that the human skin manuscript has done this deliberately, making me distrust Wang Xiaoming and thereby causing me to miss the right choice, dying from this curse.

"This human skin manuscript is no longer trying to control me as before; it clearly wants me dead. From when did it start? It must have been since Tong Qian's incident, if it weren't for Ghost Cabinet's help, I would have almost directly created a ghost with three faces." Yang Jian stared at the human skin manuscript.

"As for the time with the Ghost Envoy at the training base, I guess that doesn't count, because the human skin manuscript also suffered an attack from the Ghost Envoy; it wanted to escape the Ghost Envoy."

From beginning to end, the only thing that could make the human skin manuscript behave was the Ghost Envoy, as was the case with the Ghost Coffin incident in Huanggang Village.

After quite a while.

The handwriting on the human skin manuscript remained unchanged, and no new information emerged.

Yang Jian didn't speak; he simply packed the human skin manuscript away again, then casually tossed it, and it disappeared from sight.

He buried this thing again somewhere underground.

The location is known only to himself; as soon as he dies, this thing will never appear in this world again.

"The human skin manuscript plan has failed." Yang Jian now only had one alternative plan left.

The Ghost Cabinet plan.

"It looks like I'll need to make a trip back to Dachang City."

However, just as he was deep in thought, elsewhere.

Cao Yanhua was on his way back to headquarters, but his vehicle had broken down, causing a delay on the road. Once the road was clear and he could move on, he saw Professor Wang's car suddenly take a turn and drive away in the wrong direction.

"What's going on with car two?" an employee in the car immediately asked.

Wang Xiaoming's voice came through the walkie-talkie: "To lift Yang Jian's curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box, some preparation is required; Wei Jing and I need to take a trip."

Cao Yanhua responded, "Be careful, and just ask if you need any help; I will arrange it for you on my end."

Soon.

The car carrying Wang Xiaoming sped away, vanishing at another intersection.

Chapter 619 Xiao Ming's Greetings

The plan involving human-skin paper was no longer reliable, so Yang Jian could only place his remaining hopes on the Ghost Cabinet.

The Ghost Cabinet was in Dachang City.

Therefore, after brief contemplation and pause, Yang Jian chose to return to Dachang City.

He did not carry the human-skin paper with him, but buried it underground near He Tianxiong's villa, as he knew that if he brought the thing back to Dachang City, he might also bring back trouble. Since he was to discard it, he decided to discard it far away.

For Yang Jian, who employed the powers of the Ghost Domain, returning to Dachang City took less than a minute; distance was not an issue for him.

But this time, he did not inform anyone and stealthily returned. If he had made a grand entrance, headquarters would definitely become aware of the existence of the Ghost Cabinet.

After all, Liu Xiaoyu even knew how many movies Zhang Wei had on his computer.

In a world of information, many people no longer had any secrets.

Today.

The noon skies of Dachang City were somewhat gloomy, and the cold of winter, combined with the rain from the south, permeated the air with a chilling dampness.

On the outskirts of the city, the Guanjiang Residential Complex was still sparsely populated, with very few homeowners living there.

Though few lived there, the complex was equipped with various facilities and had even stricter management than upscale residential areas in Dachang City.

Yang Jian materialized on top of a European-style bell tower within the complex.

Inside the small loft of this bell tower, there was a wooden cabinet. This cabinet had two levels, and its doors were tightly shut, covered with a coat of red paint as vivid as fresh blood. Despite its vibrant color, the rest of the cabinet looked extremely old, as if it had been in place for decades and had become a discarded ancient artifact, not even worth refurbishing.

But this old cabinet concealed immense terror.

Inside the wooden cabinet, it was suspected that an unknown and terrifying ghost was hidden, or perhaps the cabinet itself was the ghost.

Ghost Cabinet.

That was the name Yang Jian had previously given it.

"Find it within one year."

He still remembered the last demand the Ghost Cabinet had made, after which it had provided him with a woman's photograph. The message was clear: find the person in the photo within a year.

If he assumed he had already found her, then how should he respond?

Yang Jian thought for a moment. Then he took out the paper and pen he had prepared beforehand and wrote down a message: "I have found her. Now it's my turn to make a demand. Help me lift the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box."

He reviewed the note and felt that it was fine.

The Ghost Cabinet had demanded he find the person within a year, and he was giving an ambiguous, rather deceptive answer that he had found her. Perhaps this would fool the Ghost Cabinet.

Without delay, Yang Jian inserted the note into the top compartment of the Ghost Cabinet.

Although the top compartment was closed, it had an openwork design that allowed items to be inserted. The interior, however, was pitch-black, impenetrable even by light, so regardless of how close one got, it was impossible to see anything inside. Last time he tried to look inside with his ghostly vision, he was shocked to see a pair of eyes staring back.

After that incident, Yang Jian put away his curiosity.

"Will this work?" He began to wait for a response.

Soon, the bottom door of the Ghost Cabinet opened, and the paper he had previously put inside appeared inside again, unexpectedly, with an additional line of distorted handwriting, as if penned by a malevolent ghost.

"You have not found her, you have only seen," the message read.

Yang Jian's expression immediately tensed, and a look of surprise appeared in his eyes.

He had thought he hadn't fulfilled the Ghost Cabinet's demand, but he hadn't expected to be so close to the answer: He had seen it?

Having seen it, did that refer to having seen the ghost painting?

He hadn't found it because the Source Ghost in the ghost painting hadn't appeared, so the task was not yet complete.

"How do I complete this transaction?" Yang Jian pondered again before writing another note and tossing it in.

Soon, the note that he tossed into the top of the cabinet reappeared in the bottom.

"You have nine months and three days left." It was a time reminder and did not contain any other information.

"Can't you give any hints? I have to complete the task all by myself," Yang Jian frowned.

Although the Ghost Cabinet was not as tricky as the human-skin paper, the difficulty of completion was quite daunting, and to accomplish the tasks, he would have to deal with malevolent ghosts, which involved risks.

"Ask the human-skin paper how to complete the Ghost Cabinet's task? No, that won't work. If I ask the human-skin paper, a simple matter might become very complicated. It might provide truthful information but could also choose the most difficult way for me to complete it, almost hoping to find a way to trap me to death."

This was what Yang Jian thought.

Because, no matter what you seek from the human-skin paper, it always concealed some terrible dangers you didn't know.

He had survived once or twice without incident, but Yang Jian dared not gamble with his life every time.

If he lost once, he would have nothing, even risking his life, but if the human-skin paper lost, it didn't matter, it would have another chance to try again.

"I'm in a deadlock now. The only way out is to get involved in the ghost painting incident and find the Source Ghost," Yang Jian began to muse.

There were three days left for the curse of the Eight-Tone Music Box.

He wouldn't die within these three days. Would there be enough time to find the ghost in the painting?

But what if he met the demand of the Ghost Cabinet and it was still not considered complete?

"The Ghost Cabinet just showed a message—that I've only seen it, not found it. That means the previous puzzle guess was wrong. To the Ghost Cabinet, it doesn't need me to find all the pieces, just to confirm the location of one. So is this location the ghost in the ghost painting, or that one we encountered on the spirit bus last time?"

Yang Jian hasn't forgotten that, similar to the woman in the photo, there is another... the Dried Corpse Bride.

The Dried Corpse Bride, the ghost in the ghost painting, one or the other.

Both fit the response of the Ghost Cabinet from before: seen, but not found.

"A fifty percent chance—if I choose wrong, it means mission failure, and I'll die from the Eight-Tone Music Box curse." Yang Jian squatted on the ground, staring at the Ghost Cabinet before him, lost in thought.

After a moment of contemplation.

Yang Jian immediately shook his head: "I've thought too much. It looks like there are choices, but actually, there aren't. I can't take the spirit bus and have no ability to find the Dried Corpse Bride. I can only bet on the ghost painting."

"If I find the Source Ghost in the ghost painting, my mission is completed. There's no need for me to resolve the ghost painting incident."

With this thought, the difficulty lessened, and the feasibility increased, not leaving me completely stranded.

If this path were also blocked, Yang Jian would have to stake his life on Wang Xiaoming—unless he was brave enough to take the bus.

"So, within three days, by midnight the day after tomorrow, find the ghost in the ghost painting, complete the Ghost Cabinet's trade, and then make a request to solve the Eight-Tone Music Box curse."

Yang Jian organized his thoughts.

"No. I can't cut the timing so close; I need to leave myself some leeway for other options."

"Two days. Within two days, find the Source Ghost in the ghost painting. If the Ghost Cabinet fails, my only gamble will be on Wang Xiaoming or the bus."

Yang Jian felt this was the most reasonable arrangement and significantly increased his chances of survival.

Thinking this, he decided to turn back and investigate the source of the ghost painting.

He glanced in the direction of the residential complex.

Yang Jian saw some acquaintances and his mother, but he didn't acknowledge them and instead turned and vanished from sight.

At this moment.

In Big J City.

Wang Xiaoming's car, which had left Cao Yanhua behind, stopped in front of a high-end residential complex in the city.

Wang Xiaoming got out of the car, his eyes lowered to his phone.

The satellite positioning on the phone displayed two signals.

"No deviation, Guo Fan lives in this complex," murmured Wang Xiaoming as he sent a greeting message, preparing to meet Guo Fan.

Soon.

Inside the high-end residential complex, in a rather luxurious villa, an elegant solid wood tea table was placed on the floor, surrounded by several faux-antique screens.

At the tea table, a man in his late thirties, rather thin, was intently watching a teapot being heated on a charcoal stove on the table.

Whether it was an illusion or not, under the overhead light, the man's complexion was unnaturally pale, lacking the vitality of living flesh, giving off a discordant creepiness. His eyes were numb, empty, without a spark of life; he sat still, resembling a corpse.

Guo Fan didn't like tea, but people need to do something to pass the time when idle, especially those like him, who must not dwell on wayward thoughts—distraction was the best method.

Boiling water, making tea—a simple task, which Guo Fan always made complicated.

The type of teapot, selection of tea leaves, intensity of the fire, even the kind of charcoal, he took considerable time to learn about them all.

"Wang Xiaoming sent a message, looking for you," said another man across the tea table, handing over a phone displaying a message.

Guo Fan's face shifted slightly, surprised: "Professor Wang looking for me? That's unexpected. We're hardly noticeable, and we've even failed to become team leaders before. Why would Professor Wang make time for us?"

"Not me, you," said Zong Shan, shaking his head gently.

"What a hassle, if he's already at the door, it must be something serious."

Guo Fan felt somewhat helpless, took a deep breath from a cigarette next to him, and then went to welcome this esteemed guest.

Soon.

The gate opened.

Wang Xiaoming stood outside alone, followed only by a silent bodyguard and an assistant.

"Professor Wang, what a rare visit," Guo Fan forced a wry smile, seemingly trying to appear warm.

Wang Xiaoming didn't bother with courtesy and walked straight into the house: "Is Zong Shan here too?"

"Zong Shan is my buddy, of course, he's here," replied Guo Fan. "We even acted together in the lead ghost plan recently. It's not easy these days to have a trustworthy teammate. You're not here to poach him, are you, Professor Wang?"

"Shall we have a seat and talk?" Wang Xiaoming looked at him, glancing around.

"Of course, no problem. I was just enjoying tea with Zong Shan. Professor Wang, you can comment on my tea-making skills—I've been professionally coached," Guo Fan said with a forced laugh.

"Nice to meet you, Professor Wang."

As Wang Xiaoming entered, Zong Shan quickly stood to greet him.

Here, everyone can be offended except for this Wang Xiaoming.

Chapter 620

Wang Xiaoming, Guo Fan, and Zong Shan sat at the tea table.

Guo Fan appeared very enthusiastic, showing off his tea-making skills as he prepared to brew a pot of fine tea to welcome the rarely visiting Professor Wang. Although he was nervously drumming up in his heart, uncertain about the purpose of Wang Xiaoming's special visit that day, he understood the necessity of basic courtesy.

What if Wang Xiaoming was petty and took offense at the reception?

However, it had been a few minutes since the three sat down, and not a word had been exchanged between them.

The atmosphere was incredibly awkward.

"Professor Wang, is there something special that brings you here this time?" Zong Shan couldn't help asking, breaking the awkward silence.

Wang Xiaoming shifted his gaze toward Guo Fan. "Last time, your attempt to summon ghosts failed, and because of your failure, the ghost painting incident began to appear in the city area. You don't think that after this happened, there's no relation to you anymore, do you?"

Guo Fan's hand, holding the kettle, stiffened slightly. He quickly replied, "Professor Wang, that's not fair. I risked my life to complete the mission, but what can I do if something went wrong? Who can guarantee that every supernatural event will be perfectly dealt with? Besides, my mistake wasn't intentional, and I almost died there too. It's already good enough that I'm still alive."

"Is Professor Wang here to assign blame?" Zong Shan asked anxiously, "Although the mistake was significant, there are understandable reasons."

"No, I am not here to assign blame," Wang Xiaoming said. "I arranged the plan and the personnel, so I share some of the fault for the errors."

"Then what did you mean by your words just now?" Guo Fan relaxed a little and asked immediately.

Wang Xiaoming looked at him. "Your condition is quite poor."

Upon hearing this, an unusual shade crossed Guo Fan's rigid, pale face. He had been a ghost controller for a long time, almost belonging to the same era as Feng Quan. The reason Feng Quan had survived up to this point was that he had lain in the Ghost Coffin for a few months, which nearly extended his life by two months.

That he was still alive today was indeed quite fortunate.

"Indeed, my condition is a bit poor. Can you solve it, Professor Wang?" Guo Fan didn't hide his condition and asked directly.

Wang Xiaoming said, "I can solve it for you, but I need you to do me a favor."

"What favor? Just say it. As long as I can do it, I'm willing," Guo Fan replied with some surprise, thinking it was just a casual mention, not expecting Wang Xiaoming to actually agree.

Wang Xiaoming said, "I need to borrow something from you for a while."

Hmm?

Guo Fan frowned slightly, jokingly said, "Professor Wang isn't planning to borrow my life, is he?"

"No."

"As long as it's not that, I'm relieved," Guo Fan replied.

"I need the spiritual token you mentioned," Wang Xiaoming cut through the pretense and stated his purpose directly.

At these words, Guo Fan's expression changed drastically, "There's a ghost hiding in that spiritual token; it's a very dangerous thing. Surely, Professor Wang, you wouldn't need it? This item is extremely important to me. I suffer from the assault of a fierce ghost and need to release the ghost in the spiritual token periodically to resist the erosion of another ghost."

"It's precisely because of this that I have been barely surviving and haven't died early due to the fierce ghost's revival. If Professor Wang takes away my spiritual token, wouldn't my death be certain?"

"Can you still come out after entering the spiritual token now?" Wang Xiaoming countered.

Zong Shan, who was beside them, looked on with a hint of surprise. Others might not be aware of Guo Fan's situation, but he knew. Guo Fan could potentially be trapped in the spiritual token at any moment, unable to come out; the failure of their last ghost summoning was because something went wrong with Guo Fan's guidance, and he couldn't control the situation. Although he somehow managed to survive afterwards, the signs of trouble had already surfaced.

The next time, or perhaps the time after that, if Guo Fan enters the photograph within the spiritual token, he really might die.

Guo Fan didn't know how to answer at the moment. He dared not divulge anything to Wang Xiaoming, choosing instead to say, "Last time was an accident caused by an unknown supernatural disturbance. I can still survive for a while like this, so I hope headquarters will give me this chance."

He was different from Yang Jian; he had no space or leverage to negotiate, so he took a very humble stance.

"Here, Professor Wang, have some tea."

Guo Fan poured a cup of tea for Wang Xiaoming, with a bit of an ingratiating intention.

"I have a plan, you might want to listen," Wang Xiaoming said, his face calm as he watched the teacup gradually fill up.

"Professor Wang's suggestions must be excellent, I'm all ears," Guo Fan said.

Wang Xiaoming said, "I need you to enter that spirit position again, after which I will find a way to imprison the ghost inside."

"What?" Guo Fan was somewhat surprised: "If you imprison that ghost, what happens to my body? Won't I die inside it?"

"I will switch you into a different body," Wang Xiaoming said.

Guo Fan shook his head quickly and said, "This is impossible, it's not that simple. You can't easily transfer consciousness; that power only belongs to ghosts, and that ghost is terrifying..."

Before he could finish, Wang Xiaoming interjected, "That's my concern, not yours. I'm just asking you one question, will you lend it or not?"

"Although you are the renowned Professor Wang, I really can't agree to this... I won't lend myself to you." Guo Fan's gaze flickered, and he firmly refused.

Although it was about lending that dreadful spirit position, it was essentially no different from lending his own life.

How could he agree?

Not even if the Celestial King himself came, Guo Fan was not that foolish.

Wang Xiaoming seemed to have anticipated this response, saying, "If you truly won't lend it, then I will have to take it myself, and I hope you won't blame me."

"Wang Xiaoming, what do you mean?" At that moment, Guo Fan stood up abruptly.

"No other meaning, just that I want to take the spirit position from your body within today. You should heed my advice; instead of dying at the hands of a murderous ghost coming back to life, it's better to cooperate with me. This way, you still have a chance to survive." Wang Xiaoming drank up the tea in his cup and then slowly put down the cup.

"Guo Fan, something's wrong, the sky outside... has darkened," Zong Shan suddenly noticed something abnormal at that time.

He observed that outside the window it was pitch-black as if it had suddenly turned to night, even though it was midday.

Not only that, but the darkness outside was so intense it was terrifying, seeping in continuously through the gaps in the window and from all directions of the walls, as if the darkness wanted to devour everyone in the place.

"It's the Ghost Domain." Guo Fan's complexion changed drastically, feeling a strong sense of crisis.

"Has there been a paranormal event? No, that's impossible, is this your doing, Professor Wang?" Zong Shan quickly realized the situation, his eyes staring fixedly at Wang Xiaoming.

Wang Xiaoming said, "Considering that you might not lend me the item, I had no choice but to come and take it myself. And since all of you are ghost manipulators, it would be quite difficult to take something from your hands, so I had to make some insignificant preparations, I hope you don't mind."

After finishing, he raised his head slightly and looked earnestly at Guo Fan.

"Wang Xiaoming, you've gone too far, don't think just because you're Professor Wang that I won't dare to do anything to you, provoke me and I'll take you down today," Guo Fan's anger was sparked, and he said through gritted teeth.

"Of course, you can, I haven't forbidden you from retaliating," Wang Xiaoming said. "As long as you are willing to lend the item to me, that's fine."

His tone was calm, but his stance was just as determined.

He would not rest until he took the spirit position from Guo Fan's hands.